

HRC47 | 300 NGOs urge the Council to take action on grave human rights situation in Colombia

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More than 300 NGOs have called on the Human Rights Council to demand that Colombia respect the right to peaceful protest; investigate violations committed against protestors and defenders in recent weeks and respond to protestors' demands to deal with poverty, systemic racism, inequalities and impunity in the country.



[Versión en español](#)

The voice of more than 300 national, regional and international NGOs urging the Council to step up its pressure on Colombia to address recent attacks on protestors and the deep-seated human rights crisis the country faces, was heard during the dialogue with the High Commissioner for Human Rights on her annual report to the Human Rights Council.

'ISHR was pleased to join NGOs from across the globe to calling for an immediate stop to violence against protestors in Colombia,' said ISHR's Eleanor Openshaw, 'to hold perpetrators to account and to urge the state to defend those pushing for human rights to be respected.'

Over the last eight weeks those exercising their right to protest in Colombia have faced killings, excessive use of force, acts constituting torture and other inhuman treatment, forced disappearances, sexual violence, arbitrary detentions and attacks. OHCHR figures show allegations of 56 deaths (including 54 civilians and 2 police officers) as well as 49 alleged victims of sexual violence. These attacks have continued to take place despite a ruling of the Supreme Court of Justice ordering the Colombian security forces to cease using excessive force against protestors, a call echoed by regional and international [human rights mechanisms](#).

In addition, to calls for a cessation of attacks on protestors and defenders, the 300 NGOs called on the Council to put pressure on Colombia to accept the visit of UN Special Rapporteurs.

'Colombia has failed to facilitate the visits of a range of Special Rapporteurs for many years. That these visits happen - to provide an ongoing monitoring and reporting function within the UN - is a key demand the Council must make of Colombia,' said Openshaw.

Finally, the NGOs requested that the Office of the High Commissioner to prepare a report on the human rights violations committed during the protests and request an official visit to the country as soon as possible.

In presenting her annual report to the Human Rights Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights her 'deep concern' at the allegations of serious human rights violations by State security forces in Colombia since the start of the most recent protests on 28th April. She also spoke of the need for the full implementation of the Peace Accord in responding to the current unrest and to address the root causes of the protests.

The protests are linked to deep-seated structural problems that have never been addressed, including poverty -42% of Colombian society lives in poverty and 15% in extreme poverty - inequality, growing social injustices, impunity, systemic racism and systematic violence against human rights defenders.

'We were pleased to hear the High Commissioner echo many of the same demands Colombian NGOs and allies have been making,' said Openshaw.

'Bachelet is right. Silencing protestors and defenders doesn't deal with the problems that occasioned their calls for change. Colombia must engage with the protestors and defenders and start to deal with the human rights crisis itself does that,' she added.

Two states, Belgium and Switzerland, spoke out in favour of accountability in the case of killings and attacks against protestors during the dialogue.

'We thank Belgium and Switzerland for taking that stand,' said Openshaw, 'We hope that other states will add their voice to these calls during the Council session.'

In response to the High Commissioner's report, Colombia has [challenged](#) the numbers of deaths recorded by OHCHR and has invited the High Commissioner to visit the country to see for herself how the implementation of the Peace Accord is going.

'We hope that the High Commissioner will take up Colombia's offer as soon as she possibly can,' said Openshaw.

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